

STAT

 18 February 1985

The Honorable Anthony C. Beilenson  
 The Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence  
 U.S. House of Representatives  
 Washington, D.C.

Dear Congressman Beilenson:

In the name of a small group of loyal Americans--the former spouses of CIA overseas officers--we should like to express again our great gratitude for your support of the 1984 Bill, HR-5805, that would have provided retirement benefits to the former spouses of CIA overseas officers who were excluded from such coverage under the 1982 law, PL 97-269. The same women--because they are ineligible to receive survivor annuities--are also ineligible to receive the benefits of the 1984 Civil Service legislation (PL 98-615), which gave certain divorced and widowed CIA spouses vitally needed rights to group health insurance.

Although equally deserving, these former CIA spouses were excluded from coverage by PL 97-269, because their divorces had already occurred and, in some cases, the officers had already retired. The excluded group included many of the women who had worked hard to support this legislation, because they realized from their own experience how much its protection is needed.

It is for these women that we ask for new legislation--perhaps even more difficult to achieve--that would give them rights to government-supported retirement annuities, as well as group medical insurance coverage that they would pay for themselves.

The concept of government support for former spouses of US officials serving abroad, we believe, was established by the 1965 legislation, giving pensions to widows of Foreign Service Officers (PL 89-308). Redefined in 1976, this law is still in effect, and some widows are still being paid under its mandate.

Nearly all of the excluded women are facing penury as the result of their overseas years serving this country. (A 1983-84 survey showed that only 2 percent of the women interviewed anticipated financial security in their old age.) Many were unable to accept career-enhancing paid employment because of diplomatic prohibitions and the demands of cover, as well as their frequent moves from country to country. Also, they had little time available, because many were officially required and others volunteered to fulfill a wide variety of mission-supporting duties. In many cases, the official evaluations of their contributions are now part of Federal records. (A more complete

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CIA Spouses (Cont'd.)

resume of the unique role of the spouses of CIA's overseas officers is attached.)

Today, many of the excluded former CIA spouses are in real need. For the most part, older women with outdated skills, they are finding paid employment, as well as an adequate retirement earned from such employment, impossible to obtain. Many are encountering the health problems of old age, often complicated by handicaps incurred or exacerbated by long years and difficult life abroad.

We ask that once again you come to the aid of these women who have served their country long and well. Your help will be most appreciated.

Sincerely,

Enclosure: 1

Barbara Colby



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